

BOOK REVIEWS

Berryman, Phillip. *Religion in the Megacity*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996. 210 pp. Paper, \$18.00.

Urban practitioners, particularly those from Latin America, will appreciate the time and attention that Phillip Berryman has given, in this book, to contrasting practices in Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in Sao Paulo, where Protestants are rapidly growing and may have a majority, and in Caracas, where the Roman Catholics are still very much the majority.

Latin America is a very urban continent (72% of the population live in cities). This means that the average Latin American is a city dweller, not a rural peasant. People familiar with Latin America can attest to the vibrancy of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Rio de Janeiro. It is also a continent that has witnessed numerous changes in recent years. In addition to urbanization, there have been the rise and subsequent fall of liberation theologies, and the fluctuations of democratic and totalitarian governments. Berryman looks at all of this through the eyes of a Roman Catholic who appreciates his own church and yet is sympathetic to the Protestant churches. His book allows us to see the churches and surrounding sociopolitical events through the lives and personalities of individual Christians—leaders, followers, and would-be leaders.

Because the Roman Catholic Church cannot escape being affected by political events in a predominantly Catholic society, Berryman uses these political events as a means of focusing on the activities of the Catholic Church. He notes the difficulties that conservative administrators have in dealing with social and theological progressives in the religio-political mix. He contrasts this with the relatively greater freedom enjoyed by the Protestants, but inevitably notes their “other worldliness” and distance from both politics and society.

In the first part of the book, each chapter is devoted to specific issues, theological attempts to fill the void created by the demise of liberation theology; progressive Catholicism and charismatic renewal; and the power, voice and place of women in the two communities.

The second part of the book begins with a general introduction to Caracas and the history of the Catholic Church in Venezuela. Berryman then offers pictures of pastoral practice in the city.

The last two chapters attempt to draw from his preceding observations implications for both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. In chapter 12 he notes how separate the two communities are and how little the Catholic Church knows of the Protestant churches. Thus, while they are actually in rather strong competition, the Catholic Church is mainly fighting its own internal battles rather than sensing the need to respond to an outside threat to its hegemony. The church in Brazil, however, has had more vocal progressives within its ranks and thus a better view of the external conflict.

Berryman notes that the two communities have distinctly different goals. The emphasis among the Roman Catholics is to build the church as a religio-political structure and maintain its institutional strengths. The Protestant emphasis is on leading people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through conversion and subsequent worship experiences. Since the Protestants have no hegemony to defend, they are still in some competition with each other as well as the Catholic hegemony. For Catholics, Berryman suggests, the question for the future is "not simply quantitative (numbers of those entering religious life) but qualitative: is there a younger generation able to grasp the signs of the times and to respond to the new challenges of the twenty-first century?" (157).

For Protestants (chap. 13) the issue is one of division within the body. Berryman draws the family tree of Protestants from two parents: non-Pentecostal and Pentecostal, with the former divided into "historic" and "faith missions" and the latter divided into "classical" Pentecostal and "neo-Pentecostal," with the latter now growing in dominance. Neither of these two groups has a political agenda, and thus they live outside the mainstream of the Catholic society. This lack, from Berryman's perspective, leaves them less focused and more "other worldly," focusing instead on their relative degrees of conservatism and forms of leadership development.

The final chapter (14) focuses on important lessons each group might learn from the other as they lurch toward the twenty-first century in Latin America.

This book is an excellent introduction to church life in the two cities described and will be appreciated in college and seminary classes on urban mission and ministry.

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BRUCE CAMPBELL MOYER

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997. 384 pp. Hardcover, \$24.99.

In the midst of the maelstrom of theological wranglings, and the revivification of the search for the historical Jesus ("the third quest"), comes a volume which aims to inform and guide theological students, and by extension enlighten the understanding of interested spectators.

Craig L. Blomberg, professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, is no stranger to the Gospels, having written two other volumes on this topic. In this volume, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, he surveys the Gospels in their historical and cultural contexts. In so doing, he examines their differing purposes and explores their implications for contemporary study, discussion, and Christian living. Twenty years of exposure to theological thought on the Gospels convinced Blomberg of a need for a volume which provides a systematically balanced treatment of the five essential aspects of study in the Gospels. These are (1) historical background, (2) critical methods, (3) introduction, (4) a survey of the life of Christ, and (5) historical and theological syntheses. Blomberg arranges the nineteen chapters of his book in accordance with these five areas.

In part 1, he carefully outlines the historical background of the political,